

### Mission:

Honor America's veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well being.

### Vision:

To be a patient-centered, integrated health care organization for veterans providing excellent health care, research and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner and a back up for national emergencies.

### Values:

- Trust
- Respect
- Excellence
- Compassion
- Commitment
- Empowerment
- Continuous Improvement
- Collaboration

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## Ramsey VA Clinic Is Underway



**Veterans by turn some dirt at CBOC Groundbreaking in Ramsey, MN.**

Construction of the community-based outpatient clinic (CBOC) in Ramsey, MN, is underway. A groundbreaking event, attended by an estimated 300 officials, Veterans and area school children, was held Nov. 9.

Steven Kleinglass, director of the Minneapolis VA Health Care System, opened the ceremony. He thanked Veterans and local officials for their patience during the process of planning the new clinic.

Janet Murphy, director, of VISN 23, said, "The new clinic is a great way we can express our commitment to our Veterans, celebrate their service to the country."

U.S. Sen. Amy Klobuchar said, "We can't thank (veterans) enough every day. The best we can hope do is honor your service with our actions." U.S. Rep. Michele Bachman, said, "This is truly a historic occasion. It is fitting and proper that we are here today to honor you by giving back to you in just a small measure of thanks for everything you have given us."

The 20,000-square foot clinic will serve 5,000 to 7,000 Veterans in the Northwest suburbs of Minneapolis. The clinic will provide primary care, mental health services and a variety of specialty services. It is expected to open in Fall 2011.

**SEE PAGE 2 FOR MORE PHOTOS**

## Nov. 8 Groundbreaking Event for VA Clinic in Ramsey





## Vikings Make a Pre-Veteran's Day Visit



Four members of the Minnesota Vikings met with Veterans at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center on Nov. 9. Their visit was arranged by Brad Madson, Executive Director of Community Relations/Youth Football for the Minnesota Vikings. Pictured above are (l-r): defensive back Frank Walker (#41); wide receiver Freddie Brown(#89); fullback Fahu Tahia (#38); Dave Adams, of the VFW; center John Sullivan (#65); and Don Nix, of the VFW. In photo below, players answer questions of veterans in the community living center dining room.



# Minneapolis Women's Clinic Was One of First in Nation

**By Rachel Walters, Administrative Fellow**

Minneapolis VA Health Care System (MVAHCS) has been a leader in providing women's health services for nearly 20 years. Since the passage of the Veterans Healthcare Act of 1992, which authorized VA to provide gender-specific services, MVAHCS has taken the charge to treat women veterans seriously.



Today, the MVAHCS women's clinic is still focused on providing a high quality healthcare experience to all patients. The clinic has a comprehensive, multi-disciplinary approach—providing treatments from routine primary care to specialized offerings, such as infertility treatments, uro-health, and breast and reproductive oncology. For veterans who live outside the Twin Cities, women's services are provided in all Community-Based Outpatient Clinics. .

Two leaders in the women's clinic are Dr. Angeliki Georgopoulos, Medical Director, and Debra Thilgen, Program Manager. As Medical Director, Dr. Georgopoulos serves as the foundation for the women's health team at the medical center. She is also responsible for establishing priorities and direction for the clinic and implementing quality improvement strategies.

"In the women's center we are excited to work with the Veterans as a team in order to take care of their health needs," she said. "So many inspirational women Veterans in their 20s through the 90s are part of our center!"

In her role as program manager, Debra Thilgen works to stay abreast of new initiatives in VA Women's health and to help implement new programs. She is also heavily involved in coordinating the care of patients who are sent into the community when treatment is not available inside the MVAHCS.

In addition to providing care to patients, the women's clinic contributes resources to overarching Primary Care initiatives. The Office of Patient Care Services, Primary Care Program Office, is currently working to institute a new care model called the Patient-Centered Medical Home at all VHA Primary Care sites. This initiative aims to increase access, coordination, communication, and continuity of care by allowing patients to have a more active role in their health care and by assigning each patient a team of clinical and non-clinical staff to manage their healthcare over time. The MVAHCS women's clinic will provide one of the three teams in the MVAHCS Patient-Centered Medical Home pilot study.

Regionally, VISN 23 has seen a renewed commitment to women's healthcare services, as Janet P. Murphy, MBA, Network Director, has stressed the importance of providing excellent care to women veterans. She said: "The VISN is committed to exploring and supporting efforts to re-configure space where possible to create clinic layouts and accommodations that enhance our ability to provide women's health care in a supportive, women-focused environment. Where possible our goal will be to create women specific areas for care."

Nationally, VA continues to place high priority on addressing Women's issues. VHA Handbook 1330.01, issued in May 2010, outlines the requirements for women's health programs throughout VA. Specifically, it details the measures that should be taken to ensure that eligible women veterans receive care comparable to that that men receive. It also contains guidelines for fostering an environment of safety, dignity, and sensitivity.





## Thanks to Legion and VFW, Patients Enjoy Pheasant

Each year, the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars combine efforts in a project called “Pheasant Dinners for Hospitalized Veterans.” On Oct. 26 inpatients dined on 250 pheasant and 25 pounds of wild rice. Pictured above are members of the service organizations who provided the meal and VAMC leaders.

## Narcotics Inspections – Let’s Work Together

Every month, without fail, a narcotics inspection comes down to your ward and does a narcotics inspection. Most people take this to be an annoying and tedious task but remember this is a required directive. The Controlled Substance Program is in need of voluntary inspectors with an interest in assisting the organization in meeting regulatory compliance related to narcotic and controlled substance utilization. If you are interested in assuming this role in administration, or want to learn more about the program, please contact Nick Tabbert at ext 7444.

## ***NOVEMBER VAMC Staff Career Awards – Congratulations!***

<b>50 Years</b> <i>Louis Coates</i>	<b>25 Years</b> <i>Nancy Dobbins</i> <i>Paul Fischer</i> <i>Luke Fredericks</i> <i>Thomas Keymes</i>	<b>15 Years</b> <i>Gregory Arrigoni</i> <i>Amy Halstenson-Bache</i> <i>Julia Sylla</i>
<b>35 Years</b> <i>Elaine Kroska</i>	<b>20 Years</b> <i>Patricia Conneran</i> <i>Catherine Dowse</i> <i>Linda Setterlund</i>	<b>10 Years</b> <i>John Halverson</i> <i>Patricia Nolan</i>
<b>30 Years</b> <i>Jeanne Anderson</i> <i>Cynthia Caldwell</i> <i>Patricia Huston</i> <i>Jan Thurgood</i>		

## NEWS FROM VACO

### VA Testing Quicker Ways to Access Medical Records

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is working to significantly reduce the average time needed to obtain health-care records from private physicians with the help of a private contractor and the Internet to speed claims decisions. One innovation is using a private contractor to assist VA in collecting health-care records. When private medical records support a Veteran's application for benefits, a contractor will quickly retrieve the records from the health-care provider, scan them into a digital format and send the material to VA through a secure transmission. This pilot project hopes to validate initial estimates that a specialized contract can yield records required to process Veterans' disability compensation claims in seven to 10 days instead of VA's average 40 days. The test is expected to involve about 60,000 records requests among regional benefits offices in Phoenix; New York City; St. Louis; Portland, Ore.; Chicago; Anchorage, Alaska; Indianapolis, and Jackson, Miss. At the conclusion of the test, VA officials will decide whether to cancel, modify, or expand any changes in procedures nationwide.

### VA Health System Shines in Quality-of-Care Study

A report now appearing online in the national publication *Medical Care* finds that the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health system generally outperforms the private sector in following recommended processes for patient care. A research team with VA, RAND Corp. (a non-profit research institution) and two universities reviewed 36 studies published between 1990 and 2009. While the review did not include studies of surgical care, it did cover a range of studies of diseases common among Veterans, such as diabetes, heart disease and depression. Among the specific findings of the review were: Nine studies comparing VA and non-VA care in general showed greater adherence to accepted processes of care—or better health outcomes—in VA; five studies of mortality following a heart attack or other coronary event found similar survival rates in VA and non-VA settings; three studies of care after a heart attack found greater rates of evidence-based drug therapy in VA; one found lower use of clinically appropriate angiography (blood vessel imaging) in VA; three studies of diabetes care found VA to have better adherence to guidelines; and three studies found higher rates of vaccination against flu and pneumonia for the elderly in VA.

### VA Launches VAntage Point Blog to Reach Veterans

VA is launching its first official blog, opening a new line of communication between the department and its stakeholders. The debut marks VA's latest outreach effort aimed at improving the way VA and its clients engage online. The blog, called *VAntage Point*, will be edited by VA's Director of New Media Brandon Friedman. The blog will launch with two primary features: a main column of articles written each day by VA staff and a section comprised of guest pieces submitted by other stakeholders including employees and the public. Readers will be able to comment and participate on all articles.